

VISION: TO BE THE RECOGNIZED LEADER FOR FLORIDA ON ALL AGRICULTURAL WATER POLICY MATTERS



Introduction

Privately owned Florida agriculture and forestry lands make up more than half of the state’s total land use, affording an assortment of benefits to Florida’s 21 million residents. The agriculture industry contributes over \$100 billion to the state’s economy, including more than 1 million jobs; supplies nearly 300 commodities to Floridians, the rest of the country, and the world; and provides environmental services such as water storage, groundwater recharge, and preservation of wetlands and wildlife habitat.

Agriculture is a key water stakeholder, both as a user and as a source of water recharge. A reliable, affordable source of water is essential to the long-term viability of Florida’s agriculture industry. Commissioner Putnam has stated that “water policy is the most important long-range issue facing not only agriculture but all of Florida.” We must continue and enhance partnerships that encourage co-operation among users in order to prevent allocation disputes, and work to develop responsible water policy through technology, sound science, public awareness, and collaboration to achieve our common goals. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Office of Agricultural Water Policy (OAWP) seeks to be a leader for Florida in agricultural water policy matters, and to implement strategies that protect Florida’s water resources while promoting the sustainability of agriculture.

Guiding Principles:

Long-term access to affordable sources of fresh water is essential to agriculture’s future. The industry cannot afford to develop alternative water supplies, or to compete with public supply; this reality should be reflected in regional water supply planning.

Agricultural land use has economic, environmental, and other public value (e.g., water storage/treatment, wildlife habitat, open space, bio-mass production, etc.). Providing opportunities to be compensated for these services will allow producers to diversify their income.

Agriculture is subject to unpredictable factors, such as weather and disease. Because of this, and site-specific and commodity-related differences, producers need flexibility in how they reduce their impacts to the environment.

MISSION: IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES THAT PROTECT FLORIDA’S WATER RESOURCES WHILE PROMOTING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF AGRICULTURE.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Expand and enhance agricultural Best Management Practice (BMP) implementation.

Planned Actions

- 1. Enhance agricultural water use efficiency and water quality improvement by supporting research, development, demonstration, and adoption of new technologies.
- 2. Enroll producers and assist them with BMP implementation.
- 3. BMP Implementation verification and reporting.
- 4. Review and update BMPs as needed.
- 5. Continue professional growth and development of field staff to deliver OAWP programs.
- 6. Educate interested parties about agricultural efforts to improve water use efficiency and protect water quality.



STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Ensure the availability of an adequate and sustainable agricultural water supply.

Planned Actions

- 1. Provide current and projected agricultural water use data to the water management districts for water supply planning purposes.
- 2. Annually update, and improve as necessary, agricultural water use and land use data.
- 3. Participate in regional water supply planning processes and educate water managers regarding agricultural water supply needs.
- 4. Participate in the establishment of Total Maximum Daily Loads and development of Basin Management Action Plans by providing the best available data for BMP enrollment, implementation, and agricultural land use.
- 5. Enhance agricultural water use efficiency and water quality improvements by supporting research, development, demonstration, and implementation of new technologies.
- 6. Educate interested parties about agricultural efforts to improve water use efficiency and protect water quality.



STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Manage cost share programs that support agricultural non-point source BMP implementation and water resource protection projects.

Planned Actions

- 1. Request funding through the legislative budget process.
- 2. Execute and manage contracts with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and other partners to administer appropriated funds.
- 3. Provide technical and administrative support for SWCDs and other partners.



“We live in a highly industrialized, urban culture, but it is important to remember that there is no such thing as a post-agricultural society. Policy decisions concerning agriculture, our environment, water supply and land use need to reflect this fundamental truth.” Timothy C. Weiskel, 1990



AGRICULTURAL
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